



Advancing Public Health

Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program

Background

Since 1975, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has collaborated with Ministries of Health around the world to enhance international public health capacity through Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETP). The FETP was modeled after CDC's Epidemic Intelligence Service and has since evolved to include the Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Program (FELTP).

FELTPs nurture a culture of evidence-based decision-making as program graduates investigate disease outbreaks, strengthen surveillance and laboratory systems, and serve as mentors for future public health officers in their country. FELTPs are tailored to strengthen public health capacity in accordance with each country's culture, national priorities, established relationships, and existing public health infrastructure.

A Unique Approach

An FELTP differs from traditional epidemiology training programs in that the FELTP offers training through service in applied epidemiology: the use of epidemiology as a tool to design, evaluate, and improve interventions to protect the public's health.

Trainees of an FELTP spend an average of 75 percent of the two-year program in field placements. Tasks performed while in the field include evaluations of surveillance systems, outbreak investigations, analytic studies, and publications, allowing trainees to provide service to their country during training.

An FELTP promotes epidemiology and public health laboratory collaboration by providing joint epidemiology and laboratory leadership and management training; including public health laboratorians in field investigations; using laboratory data for surveillance purposes; and improving biosafety and quality assurance control in specimen collection, field transportation, and analysis. As a result, timely and reliable laboratory-confirmed disease data is available to public health officers to support evidence-based decision-making.

Service-Oriented Training

The FELTP experience allows trainees to seamlessly transfer into public service leadership roles upon graduation from the program.

Because of the service-oriented nature of the program, trainees participate in surveillance, outbreak investigations and response, epidemiologic research, and program design and implementation under expert supervision before graduation. These activities are conducted in service sites selected to fill a need identified by the Ministry of Health. Through this experience, FELTP trainees are prepared to accept leadership roles within the Ministry of Health upon completion of the program.

FELTP Objectives

The successful FELTP will

- Address country needs and priorities
- Enhance public health infrastructure and relationships
- Supply field epidemiologists and public health laboratorians
- Strengthen capacity in applied epidemiology and public health laboratory management
- Sustain intersecting laboratory and epidemiology systems to support surveillance
- Build and maintain a network of local public health leaders

Accomplishments

- FETPs/FELTPs exist in 42 countries
- 92 percent of graduates remain in local government service
- 70 percent of programs have been sustained for 10 or more years
- Of 29 programs originally provided with a CDC program director, 19 continue without this assistance

Graduate Skills

An FELTP graduate is able to

- Design, implement, and evaluate a public health surveillance system
- Develop and implement an epidemiologic study
- Manage a field investigation or the laboratory component of a field investigation
- Manage a public health project
- Write a research protocol
- Write a scientific manuscript
- Teach a public health course
- Serve as a mentor to health trainees
- Respond to public health inquiries from the public, the media, the government, or other health professionals



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